I claim:

1. An article of commerce comprising:

(a) a longitudinally continuous web having a longitudinal down-web direction, a lateral cross-web direction, and lateral sides, with:

(i) superimposed first and second layers sealingly engaged along the lateral sides; wherein:

(A) the first layer comprises a gas permeable microbial barrier layer, and

(B) the second layer comprises a thermoplastic gas impermeable layer,

(ii) longitudinally spaced laterally extending lines of weakness in one of the first or second layer, and

(iii) longitudinally spaced laterally extending lines of separation in the other first or second layer with the lines of separation paired with the lines of weakness.

2. The article of claim 1 wherein the lines of weakness are in the first layer and the lines of separation are in the second layer.

3. The article of claim 1 wherein the lines of weakness are in the second layer and the lines of separation are in the first layer.

4. The article of claim 1 wherein the longitudinally continuous web forms a roll.

5. The article of claim 1 wherein the paired laterally extending lines of weakness and laterally extending lines of separation in the first and second layers are superimposed.

6. The article of claim 5 wherein the longitudinally continuous web is repetatively folded back at regular intervals along the superimposed paired laterally extending line of weakness and laterally extending line of separation to form a pleated stack.

7. The article of claim 1 wherein the first and second layers are sealed along the lateral sides with a peelable seal which is impervious to microbes.

8. The article of claim 7 wherein the first and second layers are sealed with a peelable seal which is impervious to microbes along a laterally extending seal line located proximate the same longitudinal side of each superimposed paired laterally extending line of weakness and laterally extending line of separation.

9. The article of claim 1 wherein the first layer is a thermoplastic gas permeable microbial barrier.

10. The article of claim 9 wherein the first layer is a spunbonded olefin gas permeable microbial barrier.

11. The article of claim 1 wherein the second layer is transparent.

12. The article of claim 1 wherein the lines of weakness are lines of perforation.

13. The article of claim 2 wherein the lines of weakness are lines of perforation with a hole:land area ratio of about 15:1 to 25:1 with about 0.4 to 0.6 perforations per centimeter.

14. An article of commerce comprising:

(a) a longitudinally continuous web having a longitudinal down-web direction, a lateral cross-web direction, and lateral ends; with:

(i) superimposed first and second layers sealingly engaged along one lateral end, wherein:

(A) the first layer comprises a gas permeable microbial barrier layer, and

(B) the second layer comprises a thermoplastic gas impermeable layer,

(ii) a longitudinally spaced series of paired laterally extending lines of weakness in the first and second layers, and

(iii) wherein the first and second layers are sealed along a pair of laterally extending seal lines located proximate each paired lines of weakness with the individual laterally extending seal lines in each pair of laterally extending seal lines separated by a paired lines of weakness.

15. The article of claim 14 wherein the longitudinally continuous web forms a roll.

16. The article of claim 14 wherein the paired laterally extending lines of weakness in the first and second layers are superimposed.

17. The article of claim 16 wherein the longitudinally continuous web is repetatively folded back at regular intervals along the superimposed paired laterally extending line of weakness and laterally extending line of separation to form a pleated stack

18. The article of claim 14 wherein (i) the first and second layers are peelably sealed with a seal which is impervious to microbes along the sealed lateral end, and (ii) each of the laterally extending seal lines form a peelable seal with a seal which is impervious to microbes.

19. The article of claim 14 wherein the first layer is a thermoplastic gas permeable microbial barrier.

20. The article of claim 19 wherein the first layer is a spunbonded olefin gas permeable microbial barrier.

21. The article of claim 14 wherein the second layer is transparent.

22. The article of claim 14 wherein the lines of weakness in the first and second layers are lines of perforation.

23. The article of claim 22 wherein the line of perforation in the first layer has a hole:land area ratio of about 15:1 to 50:1 with about 0.2 to 0.6 perforations per centimeter.

24. An automated method of packaging a medical device, comprising:

(a) obtaining a longitudinally continuous web defining a plurality of breather pouches, including a leading pouch and an immediately trailing pouch; wherein:

(i) each pouch has lateral sides, a leading longitudinal end and a trailing longitudinal end, and is comprised of superimposed first and second layers sealingly engaged along and proximate both lateral sides and the leading end so as to define a retention chamber, wherein:

(A) the first layer comprises a gas permeable microbial barrier layer, and

(B) the second layer comprises a thermoplastic gas impermeable layer, and

(ii) successive pouches are connected along laterally extending lines of weakness in the first layer,

(b) automatically conveying the web in a machine direction until the leading pouch is positioned at a fill location,

(c) automatically transversely separating the first and second layers of the leading pouch along the trailing end of the leading pouch so as to open the trailing end of the leading pouch and thereby facilitate access to the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch,

(d) placing a medical device within the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch through the open trailing end of the leading pouch,

(e) sealing the trailing end of the leading pouch with the medical device retained within the retention chamber,

(f) automatically detaching the leading pouch from the trailing pouch along the line of weakness in the first layer between the leading pouch and the immediately trailing pouch after step (d), and

(g) repeating steps (b) through (f) for subsequent pouches in the web.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein the first layer is a thermoplastic gas permeable microbial barrier.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein the first layer is a spunbonded olefin gas permeable microbial barrier.

27. The method of claim 24 wherein the lines of weakness in the first layer are lines of perforation.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein the lines of perforation in the first layer have a hole:land area ratio of about 15:1 to 25:1 with about 0.4 to 0.6 perforations per centimeter.

29. The method of claim 24 wherein the medical device is placed within the retention chamber by hand.

30. The method of claim 24 wherein the trailing end of the leading pouch is sealed automatically upon input of an electronic signal that the medical device has been placed within the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch.

31. An automated method of packaging a medical device, comprising:

(a) obtaining a longitudinally continuous web defining a plurality of breather pouches, including a leading pouch and an immediately trailing pouch; wherein:

(i) each pouch has a first lateral end, a second lateral end, a leading longitudinal side and a trailing longitudinal side, and is comprised of superimposed first and second layers sealingly engaged along both longitudinal sides and the first lateral end so as to define a retention chamber, wherein:

(A) the first layer comprises a gas permeable microbial barrier layer, and

(B) the second layer comprises a thermoplastic gas impermeable layer, and

(ii) successive pouches are connected along paired laterally extending lines of weakness in the first and second layers,

(b) automatically conveying the web in a machine direction until the leading pouch is positioned at a fill location,

(c) automatically transversely separating the second layer of the leading pouch from the first layer of the leading pouch along the second end of the leading pouch so as to open the second end of the leading pouch and thereby facilitate access to the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch,

(d) placing a medical device within the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch through the open second end of the leading pouch,

(e) sealing the second end of the leading pouch with the medical device retained within the retention chamber,

(f) automatically detaching the leading pouch from the trailing pouch along the lines of weakness in the first and second layers between the leading pouch and the immediately trailing pouch after step (d), and

(g) repeating steps (b) through (f) for subsequent pouches in the web.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the first layer is a thermoplastic gas permeable microbial barrier.

33. The method of claim 32 wherein the first layer is a spunbonded olefin gas permeable microbial barrier.

34. The method of claim 31 wherein the lines of weakness in the first and second layers are lines of perforation.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein the lines of perforation in the first layer have a hole:land area ratio of about 15:1 to 50:1 with about 0.2 to 0.6 perforations per centimeter.

36. The method of claim 31 wherein the medical device is placed within the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch by hand.

37. The method of claim 31 wherein the second end of the leading pouch is sealed automatically upon input of an electronic signal that the medical device has been placed within the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch.